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## HIGHER EDUCATION OF NEGROES IN THE UNITED STATES

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Since 1823 there have been graduated from American colleges about 5,000 Negroes, 1,000 from Northern colleges and 4,000 from colleges established especially for Negroes in the South. Probably as many as 900 of these college graduates have been women. Only 34 Negroes were graduated before emancipation and over two-thirds of these from Oberlin College. The first three American Negro college graduates were from Bowdoin, Middlebury and Ohio. The only Negro institution to establish a college department before the edict of freedom was Wilberforce University in Ohio. The department was established here in 1856, and during its first twenty years eleven students were graduated.

There was no opportunity for higher education of Negroes in the South fifty years ago, and little or no incentive to such education anywhere in the nation. In the South the opportunity and incentive came speedily in the wake of emancipation and the consequent campaign of education. This campaign enlisted many earnest and capable young men and women from the North, who devoted themselves to the work with a fine missionary zeal. They entered the field under the auspices of the American Missionary Association, and other missionary societies. By act of Congress of March 3, 1865, the Freedman's Bureau was created. The commissioner was authorized to "coöperate with private benevolent associations in aid of the freedman." Through this agency great assistance was given to the missionary societies in their work. Under the reconstruction governments public school systems for the education of the children regardless of race were organized. Whatever the mistakes and shortcomings of the reconstruction governments may have been, in the organizing of the public school system at least they built wisely and well.

Through these three agencies—the missionary societies, the federal government with its Freedman's Bureau and the state govern-

ments with their public school systems—the work of educating the freed Negroes progressed rapidly. Further to aid the work there were established two great funds. In 1867 George Peabody gave \$2,000,000 “for the promotion and encouragement of intellectual, moral, or industrial education among the young of the more destitute portions of the Southwestern States of our Union.” This gift was for the benefit of both races. It aided greatly in the development and improvement of the state school systems by which the Negro children benefited as well as the white children. The other fund referred to is the John F. Slater Fund which, when established in 1882, amounted to \$1,000,000. It was placed by Mr. Slater in the hands of a board of trust with large discretionary powers, the specified object being, “the uplifting of the lately emancipated population of the Southern States, and their posterity, by conferring on them the blessings of Christian education.” The income is distributed annually among the Negro institutions whose work commends itself to the trustees of the fund, chiefly to pay the salaries of teachers of manual arts, and partly to pay the salaries of normal instructors. In his letter of gift Mr. Slater suggests as methods of operation “the training of teachers from among the people requiring to be taught, if, in the opinion of the corporation, by such limited selection the purposes of the trust can be best accomplished; and the encouragement of such institutions as are most effectually useful in promoting this training of teachers.” In providing for the ultimate distribution of the fund he says, “I authorize the corporation to apply the capital of the fund to the establishment of foundations subsidiary to then already existing institutions of higher education, in such wise as to make the educational advantages of such institutions more freely accessible to poor students of the colored race.” These quotations clearly show the interest of Mr. Slater in the higher education of the Negroes. The need for “the training of teachers from among the people requiring to be taught” was one of the great motives which prompted the establishing of normal schools and colleges for the Negroes in the South.

The other great motive which prompted the missionary societies to establish colleges for Negroes was simple faith in their possibilities, and belief that to them as to the white people should be open opportunities for the highest human development. Their motive was in no sense utilitarian. It was simply Christian. They looked

upon the Negroes as essentially like white people; what differences there were between the two they considered accidental rather than vital, the result of circumstance rather than the result of race. Only the future could tell what would be the outcome of their venture; still they went forward founding institutions "for the Christian education of youth without regard to race, sex or color," and chartered to do not only college but university work. This was an expression of great faith in the possibilities of the recently emancipated slaves. It was truly democratic and truly Christian. These institutions were at the beginning, because of the unpreparedness of their pupils, devoted largely to work of elementary and secondary nature. Their purpose was, however, distinctly for higher education. The names by which they go and the provisions of their charters testify to this.

As stated above, the college department of Wilberforce University in Ohio was established in 1856. This is the only institution especially for Negroes to establish a college department before emancipation. In Lincoln University, Pa., the college department was established in 1864. Other institutions established these departments as soon as what seemed a sufficient number of their pupils were prepared to take up college studies; Howard University, Washington, D. C., in 1868; Straight University, New Orleans, La., in 1869; Leland University, New Orleans, La., in 1870; Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C., in 1870; Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., in 1871; Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga., in 1872. Before 1880 eleven such institutions had established college departments.

The next twenty years were characterized by the rapid multiplication of Southern institutions for the higher education of the Negroes. During this time there developed two other classes of institutions contributing in some measure to higher education: first, those organized, officered and supported by the Negroes; secondly, those generally known as the state agricultural and mechanical colleges. With the growth of the American Negroes in independence and with their practical exclusion from the Southern white churches there developed strong Negro churches and independent Negro denominations. These churches established schools for their own people, under the control of their several denominations. The schools often aspired, sometimes with reasonable success, to be institutions of higher education.

The agricultural and mechanical colleges for the Negroes are institutions supported by the Southern States with that portion of their federal land grant funds which they choose to assign to their Negro citizens. As the name implies these institutions devote their chief energies to industrial and agricultural training. There are also courses for training teachers. The Georgia State Industrial College for Negro youth is of this type. On June 10 eleven pupils were graduated from the academic course and thirty-four from the industrial departments. The Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College gives the degree of B.S. for those who satisfactorily meet the requirements. Some of the Southern States take genuine pride in the state institutions for Negroes and make generous appropriations for their maintenance. In 1912 the Alabama State Normal School received \$17,000 and the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College \$12,000 from state appropriations. The presidents and teachers of the state schools are Negroes and the salaries paid are frequently better than those paid in the institutions supported by Northern philanthropy.

The number of educational enterprises for Southern Negroes which are doing at least some work of college grade is so great as to be bewildering; and calls for some attempt wisely to discriminate among them and to determine the value of the work they are doing. Three years ago such an attempt was made by the sociological department of Atlanta University in connection with the fifteenth annual Atlanta conference for the study of Negro problems. The report of this study is published under the title "The College-Bred Negro American." More recently, in November and December, 1912, Mr. W. T. B. Williams, field agent of the John F. Slater Fund, made a comparative study of the Negro universities in the South. This was published by the Slater Fund as number 13 of their *Occasional Papers*. From these sources may be gained valuable information regarding Southern institutions for the higher education of the Negroes. The Atlanta study in discussing the Negro colleges makes a classification based upon high school work required for admission and the number of students enrolled in 1909-1910 in classes of college grade, whether in the normal or college departments. There were twenty-three institutions which required fourteen units of high school work for admission to college classes, the amount of work laid down by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement

of Teaching as necessary to prepare adequately for college entrance. Of the twenty-three, eleven had more than twenty students of college rank. Nine others were doing work of college grade. The following conclusion was reached:

As has been shown, there are about thirty-two colored institutions doing college work; but the leading colleges according to the Carnegie Foundation units, which have a reasonable number of students are: Howard University, Fisk University, Atlanta University, Wiley University, Leland University, Virginia Union University, Clark University, Knoxville College, Spelman Seminary, Claflin University, Atlanta Baptist College (now Morehouse College), Lincoln University, Talladega College.

Mr. Williams concludes his study of twenty-two Negro universities in the South with the following statements:

A few of these universities or other colleges doing similar work might be taken and so developed as to meet practically all the needs of Negro youth for many years. All things considered, the best six of these colored universities are Howard, Fisk, Virginia Union, Atlanta, Shaw and Wiley. These schools have already been of exceptional service in the higher development of the colored people. Each one has built up for itself a good following. And they are all fairly well located as educational centers for the ampler training of the brighter Negro youth of the South.

It must not, however, be forgotten that, as a study of the facilities for the higher education of the Negro in the South, this consideration of the Negro universities alone is arbitrarily narrow and incomplete. There are at least five other institutions with less pretentious titles doing as advanced and as effective work as seven-eighths of these universities. They are: Talladega College, Talladega, Ala.; Atlanta Baptist College (Morehouse College) Atlanta, Ga.; Knoxville College, Knoxville, Tenn.; Benedict College, Columbia, S. C.; Bishop College, Marshall, Texas. And there are at least a dozen other colleges whose work will not suffer in comparison with that of more than half the universities.

It should be noted that Mr. Williams' study is confined to Southern universities and therefore does not include Wilberforce and Lincoln.

Judging solely from the number of institutions offering college courses one might conclude that higher education for the Negroes was being overdone; but as a matter of fact only a small proportion of the students enrolled in the institutions in question are engaged in college work. Practically all of the colleges have also high school departments. This is made necessary by the failure of the South

to provide in the public schools for the high school education of the Negroes. Most of the institutions also have classes in the grades. Tables compiled by the Atlanta University study show in the thirty-two institutions the following enrollment:

Number of students in college classes.....	1,131
Number of students in high school classes.....	3,896
Number in grades.....	6,845
Professional.....	1,602
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>13,474</b>

Of all students of college grade and below only about 9.5 per cent were enrolled in college classes. A similar study of twenty-two universities by Mr. Williams shows only about 11 per cent enrolled in college classes.

Most of the institutions founded by the church societies offer theological courses though none of them has made the academic requirements very rigid. Mr. Williams reports that "Shaw, Virginia Union and Howard are perhaps doing more than the others to raise the grade of their regular work to that of well recognized theological schools." The Meharry Medical School of Walden University in Nashville enrolled 523 students this year. Two other universities offer graduate courses in law and medicine which qualify graduates to pass state examinations and practice successfully. Their enrollment reported for 1913 is as follows:

	PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS		
	Theological	Law	Medical
Shaw University, Raleigh....	19	8	156
Howard University, Washington.....	97	121	341

In the four institutions named above there are 1,295 students enrolled in the professional schools, representing the best work of this type done by the Southern Negro universities. Many of the brightest students of the Southern colleges have later graduated in professional studies in Northern universities.

The value of the higher education of the Negroes can be best determined by the record of the college graduates. In making the Atlanta University study, a questionnaire was sent out from which

answers were received from eight hundred Negro college graduates, a number which was estimated as covering about one-fourth of the entire number of living graduates and therefore considered typical of the whole group.

Of the number reporting 53.8 per cent were engaged in teaching, 20 per cent in preaching, 7 per cent in medicine and 3.8 per cent in law; the others were engaged in various occupations. It appears that the largest group is engaged in the work for which the first colleges were founded; they have become "teachers for those requiring to be taught." The three professions claiming the next largest numbers without question demand for the best service the most liberal education possible.

The whole system of public education in the South from the grammar school to the state college provides for the separate education of the two races; and almost without exception the Negro schools are presided over and taught by people of their own race. Most of the private schools of the industrial type and those doing work of secondary grade are also taught by Negroes. It may be said without question that such measure of success as these institutions have attained has been largely due to the teacher training of the institutions of higher education.

From information recently obtained from fifteen of the Southern state normal and agricultural schools it appears that 142 of their 347 teachers, all of them colored, are graduates of colleges. That is, 41 per cent, or about two-fifths of the teachers in the state schools for Negroes are college graduates. Of the 186 teachers and instructors at Tuskegee Institute 45, or 24 per cent, are college graduates. On the other hand there may always be found in the better Negro colleges graduates of the industrial schools who have proved themselves capable of further study. There are now several Tuskegee graduates studying at Atlanta University and several Atlanta graduates teaching at Tuskegee. This suggests that the two types of education are but branches of the same great work, the work of educating a race.

The question of the relative importance of industrial and higher education for the Negroes has led to much fruitless discussion. The truth is that both types of training are indispensable for the proper education of the people; and neither can fulfil its mission without coöperation with the other. The advantage of such industrial training as that offered by Hampton Institute is established beyond the

shadow of a doubt. One of the surest evidences of this is that it is no longer urged as a peculiar method of dealing with Negro youth, but that it has influenced and modified our opinions regarding the whole question of public school training for the children of America, tending to emphasize the organic, vital relationship between education and the problems of every day life. Hampton has been a pioneer in the campaign for vocational training not of the Negroes alone but of all Americans. As a special type of training adapted to the Negroes, it may have had opponents, but as a type of training making for efficient citizenship and specially adapted to the needs of a multitude of American citizens it has acquired a position where its friends and advocates need fear no opposition. There may be those who would allow vocational training to crowd academic instruction to the wall but the true followers of General Armstrong are not among them. And who would argue that because industrial education of this sort is good for white youth the colleges of New England should be turned into industrial or technical schools?

The higher education of the Negroes is quite a different question today from what it was fifty years ago. Like any question involving so large a number of citizens and containing so many human elements, it is a matter of national rather than sectional concern; still it must affect the Negroes and the South more directly than any other part of the nation. There are elements to deal with today which either did not exist or were practically ignored fifty years ago. At that time we did not ask the Negro if he wanted higher education and we did not consult his former master to know whether it was advisable. Northern philanthropy took the Negro by the hand and said, "I know that you have the ability to learn," and then opened before him the door of opportunity.

There were many who ridiculed the effort, saying that it was foredoomed to failure, and among them were people of the South who thought they understood the Negro race and knew its limitations. Today we must work with the Negro rather than for him. How shall we know what is best for the race without taking into our counsels the thousands of its college graduates?

Another element which must not be ignored in any educational effort for the Negroes is that growing class of Southern white people who appreciate the educational needs of the colored people as American citizens and who sympathize with their best aspirations. Dr. W. D. Weatherford, a Southerner and secretary of the Young Men's

Christian Association has organized in Southern white colleges classes for the study of the Negro problem. In 1912 there were enrolled in these classes 6,000 college men. This study has done much to quicken the interest and sympathy of white college students in the welfare of Southern Negroes.

At the second session of the Southern Sociological Congress held in Atlanta last April there was a section devoted to the discussion of the Negro problems. Dr. James H. Dillard presided and Dr. Weatherford acted as secretary. Addresses were made by white and colored delegates and both entered into the open discussions. Some of the addresses most sympathetic to the Negroes and most courageous in their condemnation of the evils of race prejudice were delivered by young professors in Southern white colleges. At the last general gathering of the congress a significant remark was made by a young colored teacher in Morehouse College. He said, in substance, "I have been greatly encouraged by the attitude of sympathy and fairness taken by young men of the white race toward the Negroes in this congress. Nothing can better make for progress than the mutual understanding and coöperation of the young college men of both races." This is certainly true, and the college education of both should help make possible wise coöperation.

And what is the attitude of these two elements—the educated Negroes and the educated Southern white people—toward the higher education of the Negroes? One question asked of the Negro college graduates in the Atlanta University investigation was, "How shall you educate your children?" The report says, "By far the greater number of those making reply are planning to give their children the advantages of a college education, hoping thereby to properly equip them for life's work, whether in the trades or in the professions." Typical answers are, "I believe in educating the child to make the best citizen; a college education to those who will take it," and, "It is my intention to give them the very best education that they can assimilate."

In answer to the question, "What is your present practical philosophy in regard to the Negro race in America?" there were many interesting answers upon which the following comment is made:

A careful reading of the above quotations from the replies of the Negro college graduates discloses on the whole a hopeful and encouraging attitude on the part of these educated men and women. Though hampered by prejudice and its accompanying discriminations as well as by lack of opportunity

these men and women are for the most part hopeful of the future of the Negro race in America.

Of this we may be certain, every Negro who receives a modern college education worthy of the name will be fully aware of the discriminations and injustices that fall to his lot because he is a Negro and lives in America. And it is a question how long he will endure with patience the disabilities under which he lives at present on this account. The answers to the questionnaire make repeated claim to equality before the law, full citizenship rights and privileges, the right to vote and unrestricted educational opportunities. What educated American citizen would demand less?

We cannot expect that all Southern white people, even those who have received the benefits of higher education, will sympathize with the educated Negroes or applaud their sentiments of independence. But there is a growing number who will.

In 1909 the Rev. Quincy Ewing of Napoleonville, La., addressed to Dr. Horace Bumstead a letter from which I shall quote in concluding; for here we have an expression of a Southern white man regarding the higher education of the Negro which will remind us strongly of the noble motives prompting the establishment of colleges for the Negroes fifty years ago.

You are very right to feel that the efforts you and others are making in behalf of Atlanta University have not only my approval but also my applause. I could not feel otherwise except on one of two grounds, viz., that the higher education is not good for a human being; or that the Negro is not really a human being. If he is a human being, he has as much right as I to everything that is humanly uplifting, to everything that makes for a complete and exalted humanness. A denial of the Negro's essential humanness is involved in every argument I have ever heard against his higher education: a denial equivalent to the affirmation, that the Negro should not be what *he* wants to be, not what he is capable of being, but what other people, his superiors, find it agreeable to themselves for him to be.

The untrammelled education of any subordinate race so easily segregated as the Negroes, must be painfully uphill work, until the spirit of true democracy becomes dominant among us; or until the mark of true aristocracy shall be among us, scorn of the idea that one man is born to serve another of a different kind, and love of the idea that every man is born to serve every other of every kind. If there were only some way to get the majority of us educated by the spirit of what is really democracy, or by the spirit of what is really aristocracy—only some way of solving this fundamental problem, all our other educational problems would be the simplest things with which we have to deal!